UNITED NATIONS

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1840
28 February 1995

TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General chairs Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) in Vienna; items include follow-up to Rio and Cairo Conferences, and status of women in United Nations.

+ Withdrawal of United Nations peace-keeping troops and equipment from Somalia continues without incident and ahead of schedule.

+ Human Rights Commission calls for establishment of a focal unit on right to development; also acts on migrant workers, minorities, religious intolerance and human rights covenants.

+ Special Rapporteur on former Yugoslavia says conflict in region motivated by political aims not religious or ethnic differences.

+ New UNPROFOR Commander assumes duties; outgoing Force Commander says Mission's humanitarian role is prime responsibility and biggest success.

+ Commission on Population and Development approves decision on follow-up to Cairo Conference.

* * *

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali continued his visit to Vienna today, where he chaired the meeting of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), which is being hosted this year by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), a United Nations spokesman said. The Committee considered a number of items including international drug abuse control, and follow-up to the Rio Earth Summit and Cairo Conference on Population and Development. It also considered questions relating to the status of women in the United Nations.

Tomorrow, the Secretary-General will chair an ACC forum, which is being held in connection with the United Nations Fiftieth Anniversary to serve as an informal exchange of views on the future of the United Nations system.

(more)

For information media—not an official record

* * *

Months of detailed planning began to pay off today, as United Nations troops and equipment were withdrawn from Somalia without incident, according to a spokesman for the Organization. The operation was running ahead of schedule and should be completed by the weekend. Some 25 ships, including 17 with the joint task force from the United States, Italy, Pakistan, Malaysia, France and the United Kingdom, were assisting in the pullout.
Italian soldiers and United States marines were patrolling the port area and the beach adjacent to the airport. The remaining 1,500 Pakistani contingent from the United Nations Mission in Somalia (UNOSOM) will pull back from their positions around the airport tonight in preparation for their departure.

The joint task force formally assumed command of the port area in Mogadishu from UNOSOM commander General Datuk Aboo Samah, the spokesman said. Later, Special Representative Victor Gbeho flew to Nairobi, where he will continue his political role, returning to Mogadishu periodically as circumstances permit.

* * *

The Commission on Human Rights has called on the Secretary-General to provide the Centre for Human Rights with a focal unit, which would follow-up on the Declaration on the Right to Development and its implementation. The Commission was concluding its consideration of the anti-racism decade, economic, social and cultural rights, the right to development, the rights of minorities and religious intolerance. The Commission also recommended that the General Assembly convene a world conference against racism, racial and ethnic discrimination, xenophobia and other contemporary forms of intolerance.

The Commission further urged States to identify problems in promoting the rights of women migrant workers and in ensuring health and social services. States were also urged to assist law enforcement officials to guarantee full protection of women migrant workers' rights, and to take measures to protect them from unscrupulous recruitment practices.

* * *

The conflict in Bosnia was motivated not by religious or ethnic differences but by political aims, the Committee on All Forms of Racial Discrimination was told yesterday as it met in Geneva. The Special Rapporteur of the former Yugoslavia, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, said "ethnic cleansing" was a political instrument aimed at intimidating a section of the population in order to evict it from one territory to another. It was practised by the Serbs, Croats and Muslims of Bosnia, he said.

Several experts expressed surprise at the Special Rapporteur's attempt to present the question of the former Yugoslavia within a political framework. Some members of the Committee said that in spite of his interpretation, apolitical factors such as ethnic, religious and other social phenomena were the root causes of the conflict.

(more)

* * *

The new Commander of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), Lieutenant General Bernard Janvier will assume command of the Mission tomorrow, taking over from General Bertrand de Lapresele who has completed one year of service. In his farewell remarks, General de Lapresle noted UNPROFOR's many successes and also his personal frustrations. The purpose of UNPROFOR had never really been understood by the people in the area, he said. However, one of UNPROFOR's greatest successes had been its prime responsibility, which was humanitarian.

General de Lapresele gave full credit for those successes to UNPROFOR's senior military and civilian commanders, as well as its personnel on the ground. He also paid a special tribute to the 140 soldiers who had given their lives for peace and the 1,204 soldiers from 38 countries who had been wounded while serving in the former Yugoslavia.

* * *

The Commission on Population and Development yesterday approved a draft decision containing its views on how follow-up to the Cairo Conference on Population and Development should affect its work. The draft covers the Commission's functioning, its proposed terms of reference, secretariat support, management, inter-agency coordination and resource base, and its programme of work.

According to the draft, the Commission should have primary responsibility for follow-up to the Cairo Conference, and should report to the General Assembly through the Economic and Social Council. Intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as international financial institutions should be invited to participate in the Committee's work.

* *** *